

## **PRESS CONTACT**

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### **LAUSD Proposes End of Funding and Reduced Access to Resources for Foster Youth Achievement Program**

**Los Angeles, CA** – The Los Angeles Unified School District plans to end dedicated funding for the Foster Youth Achievement Program (FYAP). Children in the foster care system depend on the stable longevity of the kind of foundational care LAUSD currently provides. Funding and support for foster youth in the Los Angeles Unified School District will be diluted due to proposed changes in budget cuts and an increase in counselor casework. Students, teachers and parents fear the shift will cause a disservice to the community, particularly for students who rely on the foundational care of a stable foster care system.

“We recognize and acknowledge the intent from the district to become more efficient and find strategies that will address the whole child, however, we know that good planning takes time with the inclusion of partners in the process to ensure that it meets the needs of students most impacted by those services,” said Jessenia Reyes, Manager of Educational Equity at Advancement Project California. “And we liken this proposed change to asking a single firefighter to put out the fire, assess the damage, and build the house from the foundation up. It’s too much for one person.”

Foster youth have tailored needs in which the current Foster Youth Achievement Program addresses, ranging from ongoing intensive case management to individualized plans. More importantly, the scope of work entails advocacy for foster youth rights in schools. A restructured program would result in disruption to both the current model and quality care, with a lack of full transparency on expenditures of the program.

The current Foster Youth Achievement Program dedicates a certain number of specialized counselors to address the unique issues that foster students face. The program has proven successful, raising graduation rates by 10% with full support and training on a regular basis. However foster youth remain far behind their peers, and the District should continue to seek improvement for at-risk students rather than hinder focus and end dedicated funding.

With a proposed end to funding, the youth of Los Angeles will undergo disruption in the current foster care infrastructure, as a lack of access and support in schools will exacerbate school enrollment and graduation rates. Community partners, board members and foster youth counselors ask to receive full clarity on the details of the budget cuts.

As a part of Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) legal requirement to provide community engagement, we ask the district to include community partners, foster youth students, and

counselors to help shape new programmatic approaches and/or changes. Community partners and counselors have been advocating on this topic since April and their voices and asks are not reflected under the current Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

We ask the board to keep the current caseload at 65 students per counselor (or below) and not increase the caseload to the proposed 155 students per counselor.

Every child deserves quality care. Redistributing funds and altering the Foster Youth Achievement Program will be detrimental to the academic progress of foster youth in Los Angeles. Lack of devoted academic attention will cause a ripple effect of high mobility rates and undercuts the support that foster students are legally entitled to.

The Foster Youth Achievement Program should be left as is and most importantly, the caseload for FYAP counselors should NOT increase. FYAP counselors have remarkable skills and training to assist foster youth students. It is critical that these services not be diluted to serve a larger caseload.

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### **About Advancement Project California**

Advancement Project is a next generation, multiracial civil rights organization. In California, the organization champions the struggle for greater equity and opportunity for all, fostering upward mobility in communities most impacted by economic and racial injustice. Advancement Project California builds alliances and trust, uses data-driven policy solutions, creates innovative tools, and works alongside communities to ignite social transformation.

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